



- 1. If the project received funding for broadband planning, please describe progress made against all goals, objectives, and milestones detailed in the approved project plan. Be sure to include a description of each major activity/milestone that you plan to complete and your current status. (Answer below.)**

The Nebraska Information Technology Commission Community Council (NITC), University of Nebraska - Lincoln (UNL), Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) and the AIM Institute are cooperatively leading the effort to address the broadband planning needs of Nebraska's communities. UNL is the fiscal agent for the planning part of the grant.

A number of activities were identified in the initial grant to identify barriers to the adoption of broadband and IT services, creating and facilitating local technology planning teams, and collaborating with broadband service providers to encourage broadband deployment and use. In the supplemental grant, activities were focused around three projects: capacity building, technical assistance and local planning. Following the NITA guidance and recent Webinar recommendation, the quarterly report will focus on the three project areas. For each section area, there is an overall summary of the project and then a quarterly update of the particular area.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Internet Connectivity and Use in Nebraska: A Household Survey – initial and follow-up.

Nebraskans were surveyed about their computer and Internet usage, challenges and desires for the future through a survey conducted by UNL. The survey, mailed in February 2010, to 6,600 Nebraskans achieved a 47% response rate. The report, available at broadband.nebraska.gov, highlights regional, education, income, age, gender, racial and ethnic group comparisons.

A follow-up survey of households will be conducted in 2014 (Year 5 of grant) to document changes in Internet and broadband use since the initial survey. Regions that were originally identified as either unserved or underserved in the initial survey will be over-sampled in this follow-up survey.

1st Quarter 2013 Status Update. Quarter 1 2013 UNL Research Team met regularly to review initial survey questions to identify which questions to carry forward for comparison in follow-up survey as well as identifying additional questions to identify changes that have occurred. In addition, benchmarks were identified for each region to incorporate into the regional plans.

Business Survey

Businesses will be surveyed through the Department of Economic Development's Business Retention and Expansion program to identify the strengths and challenges they face in utilizing technology. To develop the statewide plan, over 1000 businesses will be included in the database as communities and regions have the capability to gather information from all types of businesses including retail, health care and services. The BR&E survey asks over 10 specific questions related to technology and broadband utilization. Additional questions will be developed that relate specifically to future opportunities. The data will be pulled together and themes will be developed.

1st Quarter 2013 Status Update. During Q1 explored how to strengthen this overall effort that identifies the broadband and technology needs of businesses. A plan is evolving and will be identified during Q2. Broadband representatives will participate in the Nebraska Economic Development Association meeting in May 2013.

Inventory of Broadband and Digital Literacy Programs. In order to identify potential partners and to avoid duplication of efforts, an inventory of broadband and digital literacy programs will be conducted. Results will be shared with project partners, regional teams and be available on the broadband portal.

1st Quarter 2013 Status Update. Continue to update information located on Web site. Continue to explore opportunities to expand inventory. During Q2, efforts will be enhanced to identify technical expertise available in the libraries, community colleges, university and nonprofits. Technical assistance is critical to move broadband adoption forward.

Focused Surveys. Focused surveys in regions where there are large numbers of non-adopters will help to better understand how to increase broadband adoption. The surveys will be conducted in specific counties, regions and in some parts of metropolitan areas where usage appears to be lower and will provide these areas with data specific to them that can be used to develop a plan that addresses their future needs. The surveys will also create local benchmark data that will help determine if broadband adoption increases in these areas over time.

1st Quarter 2013 Status Update. In Q4 2012 the North Central Regional Planning team determined not to conduct an in-depth survey at this time. Through focused groups and working with regional groups, it has become apparent that more effort needs to be placed in the business community. During Q2 a plan will be developed to move this effort forward.

Government and Economic Developer Survey. To gather information on access, adoption, usage, and technical assistance needs of all county and community governments, chambers of commerce, and for economic developers, a survey (web-based where feasible) of all entities will be conducted. This information will support the development of regional and community technology plans and will be used to develop targeted technical assistance for local governments and economic developers.

1st Quarter 2013 Status Update. Surveys were conducted with the Nebraska Economic Development Association, Nebraska Association of County Officials, and the League of Nebraska Municipalities during Q2 2012. During Q4 the full reports were written and are available at broadband.nebraska.gov. In Q2 and Q3 2013, renewed efforts will be made to connect with the economic developers and county organizations. Representatives from the broadband planning groups will be in attendance the semi-annual conferences during Q2.

Creating Broadband Plan/Administrative – To meet the objectives of grant, the broadband planning oversight team meets on a bi-monthly basis and quarterly with PSC commissioners.

1st Quarter 2013 Status Update: - During Q2, a promotional effort will be made to show the changes in broadband availability that have been made in Nebraska and to increase awareness. An emphasis will be made to push people to the map to check speed. Strategically identifying how best to move broadband planning efforts forward through end of grant. The broadband

initiative was highlighted at several statewide conferences including MarketPlace where many rural participants asked for suggestions in identifying high speed internet.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Three cross-training efforts were identified in the Supplemental Application to address broadband adoption and utilization. These efforts outlined below are the Statewide Conference, Regional Workshops and Webinars.

Statewide Conference. The statewide conference will be focused on broadband adoption and utilization will bring together many industries including those working in economic development, telecommunications industry, education, state government, and local government personnel.

1st Quarter 2013 Status Update: Status. Planning is underway for the 2013 Broadband Connecting Nebraska conference on October 16-17 in Kearney, Nebraska. An initial meeting with community leaders was held in Kearney during Q1, with numerous ideas and suggestions brought forward for topics and speakers. One conference keynote speaker, futurist Jack Uldrich, has been confirmed for the luncheon keynote on October 16. The conference facility (Younes Conference Center) has also been confirmed and a block of hotel rooms reserved. Plans for Q2 include fleshing out the overall conference program, confirming speakers, and designing a youth track for college and high school students.

Regional Workshops. Regional workshops will be held to address specific issues related to an area on broadband adoption and utilization.

1st Quarter 2013 Status Update: Initially each region was determining their own plan. After focus groups and working with regional groups, many common themes were identified. Plans are underway to create workshops that will highlight the planning efforts and challenge participants to think about how broadband can be utilized to enhance their community and business. The format will be similar for all regions and offered at several locations across a region to touch as many participants as possible.

Webinars. Up to four webinars will be held each year to address broadband adoption and utilization. Topics may include how to set up community planning groups to sharing results of the various data collections, processes and best practices.

1st Quarter 2013 Status Update: Fourteen (14) webinars have been held since 4th quarter 2011. Participation in webinars have averaged 50 participants and follow-up viewings have ranged from 21-317. Webinars that have had the most views include a Broadband 101 webinar in 2011. In 1st Quarter 2013, a series entitled “Don’t Know What I Don’t Know” began and focused on three areas – cloud computing, security and mobile. The interactive webinars have created an interest. During Q2 determining other topic areas and ways to strengthen the webinar series. Webinars are archived at <http://broadband.nebraska.gov/events>.

Best Practice Videos. One way to expand broadband adoption across Nebraska is to learn from communities, businesses and other organizations who are the early adopters and “get it.” This project initiative will identify at least 20 examples of best practices throughout Nebraska and conduct video interviews with key players. These individuals will be asked to describe the essential elements of their success.

- *1st Quarter 2013 Status Update:* Status: 35 videos have now been launched through the broadband efforts. Views have ranged from a low of 3 to 153. Efforts are underway to connect

the videos to topical areas such as security to increase this awareness effort of what broadband can do. Best practice videos have highlighted the benefits of broadband technology. Businesses have connected to multiple business sites and clients to applying latest machine technology. During Q2 and Q3 will begin to explore how to share these information and powerful videos to a wider audience. Videos are archived at <http://broadband.nebraska.gov/videos> or visit the Youtube channel has been created to host the videos - <Http://Youtube.com/broadbandnebraska>.

Entrepreneur Acceleration System (EAS). This project has the potential to be a model for other states as they develop entrepreneurs .The 2011 cohort concluded during Quarter 4 2011 with the 2011 Impact Summit. Forty-six guides/mentors were selected for the 2012 EAS program which started in 1Q 2012. These guides selected 160 companies and 746 managers to work with through the program, impacting almost 5,000 employees in Nebraska. Participating companies attend the four core workshops led by Gallup in Quarter 1 through 3 of 2012. Companies are also provided one on one support from a Gallup trained guide and participate in self-paced activities administered online throughout program. Results are on broadband.nebraska.gov.

1st Quarter 2013 Status Update: Status: The broadband component of this activity is completed.

Technical Assistance Expertise. The focus of this effort will be to provide technical assistance in the area of business and entrepreneurship to chambers of commerce, economic developers, and local and county stakeholders statewide and regionally to increase broadband adoption.

1st Quarter 2013 Status Update: Small business education around security issues and knowing what was available and what was needed was identified by regional groups and led to webinar focused on security. The regional groups and focus groups that there are two areas that technical assistance can enhance broadband adoption. One, is in identifying a plan to connect to communities and businesses to provide technical assistance and two, that many businesses need to understand the return on investment before taking the risk to move to broadband.

Broadband Portal Development - Develop a central broadband portal which will serve as a source of information on broadband efforts in Nebraska and technical assistance materials.

1st Quarter 2013 Status Update Website officially launched in April 2012. Since that time we have had 8,626 visits and 5,522 unique visitors with an average visit of 3:45. During the last quarter January 1-March 31, there were 1,868 visits and 1,271 unique visits with an average visit of 3:54. During Q2 2013, there will be additional marketing efforts to bring people to the site to view the map, videos and web.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING

Regional Planning Teams. Regional planning teams will be formed to conduct regional assessments, prioritize opportunities, and develop strategies. Regional coaches will assist planning teams in conducting the development of plans. Each of the regions will hold a regional forum. The forums will be conducted to present broadband mapping and mail survey results, to solicit feedback, and to kick off regional planning efforts. Project partners will work with regional planning teams to host forums to present broadband mapping data and mail survey results, to solicit feedback, and to kick off regional planning efforts. Over 300 individuals participated in the eight regional forums. Of these 300

individuals, around 80 initially indicated a willingness to serve on the planning teams. Regional coaches have additional planning members who represent a broad area of interest.

1st Quarter 2013 Status Update: The eight extension educators continue to work in their regions. The goal to highlight the priority areas at the broadband conference in October was not achieved; however, the teams are on target and draft plans will be available late April 2013 to allow for feedback in the regions. Regional groups have been actively working on the plans during Q1 2013. Initial presentations will be held end of April 2013. Following is a brief highlights from the Southwest Regional Planning teams:

Southwest Region – Four focus groups were held in the SW Region with twenty-five attending. The discussion will influence the regional planning report. The information varied across the region but not a lot. The big thing across the region was to keep growing and improving what we have. Also, that it is no longer a want but a NEED. We NEED high speed to get and keep business in the area for everyone from farmers to higher education and everyone in between.

L earned challenges of many rural participants who have inadequate service and paying nearly \$100.00 or month through satellite. And, then they are being capped and unable to have access within the first week of a monthly service.

Community Planning - North/South Omaha. North and south Omaha were identified as underserved regions/areas through the survey of Nebraska households. The AIM Institute will be leading efforts in Omaha to address broadband adoption and utilization.

1st Quarter 2013 Status Update: Several meetings with community leaders in north and south Omaha were held during Q1 in conjunction with the project's strategic planning initiative in these communities. These areas were identified because they include some of the lowest broadband adoption rates in Nebraska. Broadband services are available in these communities, although cost is a consideration. A primary concern that has been expressed is a significant need for basic training programs in the use of computers and broadband services. Plans for Q2 include continued conversations with community leaders and identification of actionable strategies for addressing key concerns.

Community Planning - Cultural and Unserved Communities. We will form additional community or local planning teams in regions/areas identified as underserved through the survey of Nebraska households and broadband mapping data. Coaches with specific knowledge of these regional areas will be added to work specifically with these areas to develop plans relevant to their situation regarding broadband adoption and availability.

1st Quarter 2013 Status Update: The opening of the radio station has created interest in utilizing broadband to deliver programming and connect with the three NICC campuses – in Macy (Omaha tribe), Santee (Santee & Sioux tribes) and an urban audience in South Sioux City. The college is the primary location where people access the internet and is exploring with broadband planning cultural coach how to utilize technology to further the mission of education, healthy lifestyle and cultural. The tribes are now working on moving the radio station to online delivery. While this is not focused totally on the objectives of the grant this effort will have significant impact and is creating more interest in broadband and technology use.

Focus Groups. Seven to 10 focus groups will be held with anchor institutions and utility providers as well as populations with low usage rates to gain understanding into the barriers to broadband adoption and utilization from their perspective. Focus groups will also be held with businesses including farmers and ranchers.

1st Quarter 2013 Status Update: Status: Four focus groups were held in the Southwest region. Four additional focus groups were held the beginning of Q2 2013. Focus groups in these regions confirmed that broadband access has increased in the area primarily in the health industry and education. Access continues to be a challenge in a number of areas. Where there is access, communities are interested in exploring ways to increase utilization. Where there is limited access or reliability, the conversation has focused on what a community needs to do to increase broadband.

Community Sector Discussions. Community Sector discussions will be held to further advance adoption of technology in specific industries such as business and entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce, agriculture and the health industry. The focus of each discussion will be to benchmark technology use across the specific sectors, set goals for improved technology, and develop a plan to achieve goals.

1st Quarter 2013 Status Update: Community sector discussion will begin in the regions. In the Northeast region several focus groups will be held on agriculture. Agriculture and health are two community sector groups that have been identified. Session was held at the Nebraska Ag Technology Association (NEATA) meeting in February.

In addition, 27 Nebraska LEAD participants learned about the Broadband Mapping and Planning Initiative during their Western Nebraska tour in Scottsbluff. This statewide agricultural leadership development program provides Nebraska's promising adult men and women agriculturalists an opportunity to enhance leadership development, essential for long-term future of farming/ranching, agribusiness, Nebraska and the nation. Many participants are actively engaged in using broadband in their farming operations.

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BROADBAND SUCCESS STORIES

SUCCESS STORIES FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Thirty-five videos have been uploaded to the Nebraska Broadband website. The videos identify benefits and results of using broadband technology. As an example, Agilx, a fast-growing technology company provides custom programming and payment processing services to a global market, which possible only because of reliable access to broadband technologies. The company identified the following benefits: the ability to offer services developed for customers providing long distant operations and continuous access to service without personal intervention. A major impact is the confidence in providing successful current operation of equipment.

Videos are hosted at broadband.nebraska.gov.

SUCCESS STORIES FOR REGIONAL PLANNING

Focus groups have been effective at increasing interest and conversation around broadband. Providers who have attended recognized the importance of providing educational programs on broadband use. Planning team recognized that providers are beginning to communicate more amongst each other.

The focus group conversations have been essential at informing communities of efforts to increase broadband availability in rural areas.

The Southwest focus groups found providers discussing and trying to find ways to bring broadband to rural areas. In Benkelman, Nebraska we learned of the local telco provider working creatively with farmers who live more than 10 miles from a community. Conversation also started between participants and provider to attempt to figure out how they can have service.